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HISTORY.

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*HISTORIA vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriz, magistra  
vitz, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia, nisi Oratoris, immortalitati  
commendatur.*

*CICERO DE ORATORE.*

CHAPTER I.

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Of the many who read history, few are aware of the difficulties which beset the historian. To record truth is his business; to convey instruction, should be his object; and to the superficial observer, the detailing of a regular succession of facts, with precision, and sincerity, may appear easy; but, truths may be related without conveying instruction, and instruction can never be successfully administered if it be not recommended by those graces of composition, which relieve subjects of a dry nature from wearisome dulness, which attract attention, where interest flags, and give animation, and spirit, to the most cold and lifeless materials. Upon the reading of a dry, jejune narrative of events, utterly destitute of ornament, few will bestow time or trouble. To render history generally useful, therefore, it must be made attractive, and, to that end, decorated with the finest, but most simple drapery, which judgment can select from the stores of imagination, to embellish truth, without concealing her natural form, altering her complexion, or encumbering her with superfluous ornament; a task of no

small difficulty, since, when the rein is once given to the fancy, it is hard to restrain its career, and the very best writers, in the warmth of composition, are often, imperceptibly, allured away from the strict line of truth, by the eager pursuit of meretricious finery; of a flowing period, a lofty climax, or a pointed, striking antithesis.

In the composition of history, however, there are more formidable difficulties than those connected with style. As it is not easy to give a perfect display of truth, and yet clothe it with the ornaments of fancy, or to steer a middle course between dry narrative and frothy relation, so it is extremely difficult to give to history its measure of reflections, without exceeding, or falling short of propriety; for, while mere narrative, without those, is to be regarded as little better than a file of newspapers, a redundancy of reflections without a proportionate share of facts, differs but little from a novel or romance. Remote at once from the plodding compiler on the one hand, and, on the other, from the vain pedant, who employs his powers to dazzle the imagination with a gaudy display of bloated sentiments, and pompous, turgid phraseology, stands the true historian, who knows that utility is his first, and principal requisite, ornament but a secondary adjunct; and that his business is to direct the mind to truth, and to engage the understanding by just reasoning, and reflections more solid than shewy, more sound than splendid. History is not, like a novel, calculated, only to entertain in perusal, and then to be consigned to oblivion; but a faithful repository of interesting events, to be occasionally referred to for the purposes of information and instruction. Truth being the object of the historian's inquiry, he, above all other writers, is bound to think for himself, and to banish all prejudices imbibed by education, or received from reading, habit, discourse, or any other causes. Should he, however, possess that rare power, and, along with it, discernment to guide his re-



searches, judgment to draw just conclusions, candour to direct his reflections, and elegance of style, luminous fancy, and a bold imagination, to adorn his compositions; still he has other difficulties to obstruct his march to public approbation. He may have obtained a complete victory over his own prejudices, but cannot hope entirely to subdue the various and conflicting passions, prepossessions, and prejudices of his several readers. Each man admires that part of a history, which inclines to his own favorite bias; and the historian who has the power to divest himself of party prejudice, will, probably, be apprehensive, that a rigid impartiality would be injurious to his interest, or unfavorable to his reputation. Can it then occasion surprise, that of the multitude of historians who have done honor to literature, by splendid compositions, so few should be found strictly impartial. Were a writer to pen the history of a country split into two contending parties, with such rigid integrity, and such even judgment, as to shew himself to be inclined neither to the one, nor the other, it is highly probable he would be disregarded by both, for his moderation. The furious partizans of each, would either despise him as a lukewarm friend, or abhor him as a suspicious enemy. But if he appear a flaming enthusiast on either side, he may depend upon the warmest encouragement. It matters not how contemptible his performance may be, praises will be lavished upon it; and, like Sacheverell's foolish sermon, it will be idolized by the bigots of that party, with whose doctrine it coincides.

Thus does the historian lie at the mercy of those very persons who are least qualified to estimate his merits; nor is it altogether certain that the mere compiler, or the most tame, scrupulous chronicler will escape the same fate: Matters of fact often inculcate all parties, and truths too frequently criminate them. To those the statement of such facts will seem impertinent, and the displaying of such

truths appear offensive; but still the duty of the historian, or the chronicler, remains the same; like truth itself, it is immutable; from purity, strict justice, and impartiality, he must not knowingly swerve, to please or oblige either party; he must be careful to omit no incident of moment; and he must deliver his sentiments with frankness, boldness and impartiality.

It must, nevertheless, be acknowledged, that there are particular cases in which, from motives of prudence, of decency, or of benevolence, the historian ought to wave many of his privileges, and the world to dispense with his observance of some of the strict laws, to which, generally speaking, he owes obedience. When writing the history of the present time, there are considerations of a peculiar kind which force themselves upon his reason and feeling. Boldly to censure living characters, and to expose the corrupt motives of their political conduct, may, perhaps, be thought imprudent, and is certainly unworthy of the amenity, and generous feelings, which ought to distinguish an historian. It is uncandid, too, because in striking a balance between the good and evil of any person's political life, partial mischiefs may, in the end, seem preponderated by partial benefits; and the sum total of his conduct may be found good, while some of the particular isolated parts which compose it, are highly censurable. To the characters of the recently deceased, too, benevolence may well extend a similar privilege, since the exposure of their corruption, might deeply wound innocent and honorable connections, to whom their memory is dear. It is true, that he who complies with this monition, upon the principle now stated, runs the risk of being impeached of want of boldness; but the historian will still have a very strong foundation on which to ground his defence; namely, that in the share which any individual bears in the history of his country, there may be many latent springs of action which not only cannot be discovered



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while he is living, but which only length of time, can fully develope, and bring to light. The historian of the existing period, therefore, should chiefly confine himself, to the collecting and recording of materials as they rise, and postpone reasoning, and inferences till a future day, when he or some other will be able to make reflections on the detail of political actions he has so recorded, and on the characters of the actors in them, with deliberation and coolness; and with a proper degree of freedom, certainty, and discreet firmness. This restriction, however, does not, by any means, extend so far as to preclude useful precepts of wisdom, morality, and benevolence, which ought ever to be among the principal views of an historian.

Portrait painting, in history, is one of the most difficult parts of the historian's very difficult office; yet it is that which might with least disadvantage be dispensed with. He is then drawing the best pictures of those personages who perform leading parts in the national drama, when he is describing their conduct, and recording the transactions in which they have been actors. The reader then pursues the living character through every page; the true portrait of the man appears in his actions, in which future ages will find a much more just and lively image of his qualities and disposition, than they can receive from the pen of any historian. By an unintentional mistake, an innocent, perhaps an honest prejudice, or an involuntary acquiescence in the suggestions of a vivid fancy, or a warm imagination, the drawer of a character may be betrayed into a single stroke of the pencil, which, if it were contemplated separately from the original, might be thought scarcely discernable, and very unimportant, yet will, nevertheless, completely marr the picture, dismiss from it all sort of resemblance, and cast over the features an expression so widely different from the true one, as to make the character portrayed, completely at variance with the conduct of the

person for whom it is designed. Were amusement the sole object of history, the drawing of characters would be the most important part of the historian's task ; but, since the transmission of truth, and the conveyance of instruction, are its legitimate objects, it were adviseable to deal very sparingly, if at all, in a business which takes so much out of the hands of certainty, to deposite it in those of unrestrained discretion, and opens such a wide door to the operations of fancy, where facts, only, ought to be admitted. They who take characters as they are summed up in the gross, seldom, if ever, form a just idea of any.

It is highly probable that the glowing pictures which we see pourtrayed in history, have but little resemblance to the characters for whom they were designed, and serve to shew rather the skill of the authors, than the real features of the originals. Still less is it to be doubted that the fidelity of the historian is often sacrificed to the vanity and ostentation of the author, that truths are sometimes perverted or miscoloured, and fabrications presented as facts, to answer the views of a writer, or gratify the restless, insatiable curiosity of those who are desirous of reading circumstantial details, and are not content with receiving the great useful outline of an historical transaction, without the minute subordinate parts, however unimportant, or intrinsically useless they may be. A very learned French philosopher\* has censured this fault in historians, with great and merited severity ; and relates two singular instances of it, which are scarcely less wonderful than amusing. " An historian of the last age,† (says he) well known for his falshoods, was told that he had altered the truth in his relation of a certain fact : *That may be !* (replied he) *but what does that signify ? Is not the fact better as I have related it ?* Another‡ (continues he)

\* Monsieur D'Alembert.

† Varillas.

‡ Abbe Vertot.



had a famous siege to describe : The memoirs, which he expected, not coming soon enough, he wrote his history of the siege, partly from the little he knew of it, and partly from his own imagination ; unfortunately, the account he gives of it, is at least as interesting as if it had been true ; the memoirs came at last : *I am sorry for it, (said he) but my siege is finished.* This (says Monsieur D'Alembert) is the way in which history is written, and posterity think they are instructed."

We are, generally, less dazzled and allured, by the brilliant polish of things modern, than by the venerable rust which time has thrown upon the works of antiquity : It is a noble prejudice ; sometimes unjust indeed, but most frequently right : To our veneration they are entitled, but not to our idolatry. As superstition is the shame, and the canker of religion, the homage we pay to the ancients, when carried to extremes, and unjustly bestowed, is greatly injurious to letters, and derogatory to the dignity of the human intellect. In one respect, modern historians are certainly less exceptionable than the ancient. The histories of the latter are finished master-pieces of eloquence, replete with lofty moral sentiment, and lightened with true philosophy ; they contain the finest pictures of vice and virtue, of liberty and despotism ; in their luminous pages, transactions are made almost visible to the eye ; and great and extraordinary personages seem to live and move before us ; But it is more than doubtful whether they are transactions, such as ever occurred, or persons such as ever existed. They give us harangues of astonishing beauty, force and eloquence ; but, they are harangues which, it is not only probable, never were spoken, but which, in many cases, could not, in the nature of things, have been spoken at the time, or on the occasions stated. Speech-making was their passion : Even Tacitus has yielded to it : And the greatest admirer of the ancients, if he have candour, must own,

that, in some things, they wrote history, rather like orators and poets, than true historians. Hence they are very bad models for those who wish to succeed in that species of composition. A great French writer has said, "the history, even of TACITUS, would lose little were it to be considered, only as the first and truest of philosophical romances." What then must be thought of all the others, who, in the knowledge of MAN, were eclipsed by that wise and admirable writer? This is a fault from which modern historians are very free. He who should now fill his history with harangues, would be considered as no better than a school-boy, hurried away by a puerile imagination. In getting rid of this fault, however, the moderns have fallen into an evil of another kind. History, being once considered a sort of composition, which required no stock of one's own, a multitude of inferior writers have laid hold of it, and swelled, to an enormous size, the catalogue of volumes, without, in the smallest degree, increasing the sum of human knowledge, or contributing any thing to the instruction of mankind.

Manifold then, and great are the difficulties, which beset the historian, which retard his progress, or entirely shut up against him the road to fame, and frustrate his best efforts to serve mankind. Avoiding one error, he incurs the risk of falling into another. By checking the imagination, he may become dull; by avoiding dulness, he may become frothy; and, endeavouring to animate and give interest to his narrative, he may give too great a loose to exuberance of fancy. Fearing to give too strong a tincture of his own way of thinking, to the facts which he relates, he may be too sparing of useful, solid reflection: fearing to be deficient in instructive reflection, he may be led to discolour facts to the complexion of his own particular bias: he may unintentionally sacrifice the strictness of truth, to brilliance of thought and expression; and he may



fetter his mind, and enslave his language for fear of trenching upon truth. The danger of appearing gorgeous and inflated, may prevent him from enriching his work with the legitimate beauties of his own mind, and the apprehension of sinking into dry jejuneness, may betray him into thoughts of gorgeous conceit, and a style of licentious bombast. In his efforts to avoid the fault of dazzling with too much ornament, he may disgust with overstrained homeliness; shunning prolixity, he may become obscure; and avoiding obscurity, prolix. Addressing himself entirely to the understanding, he may forget the claims of the heart; and appealing to the heart, he may leave the judgement unsatisfied. But all these are trivial difficulties, compared with those which he has to encounter from the overheated zeal, and political rancour of all parties: He may be impeached of officiousness, or, perhaps, malicious views, if he develop the whole truth, and of corruption if he withhold it. The fact which leans against either party, may be treated by them as a satire, which he might have left out, or as a compliment gratuitously bestowed on the other, for the unworthy purposes of adulation.

Notwithstanding all those disadvantages, History will be written, and the Historian how much soever he may fall short of his own wishes, or his readers' expectation, has it in his power to secure to himself one consolation. The consciousness of integrity, industry, probity, and truth, are always within the competency of every thinking being. If then, he scrupulously maintain fidelity to facts, and, as has already been said, swerve not from truth to please one party, or oblige another; and if he deliver his sentiments with amenity, candour, impartiality, and frankness, he will do all that God requires at his hands; and, though he may not obtain the admiration, will stand a fair chance to gain the esteem, of all those whose esteem is worth the possessing.

The difficulties and disadvantages which attend the labours of the historian, being thus pointed out, it may not be inexpe-

dient to say something of the nature and uses of history. In its most enlarged and comprehensive sense, history includes an immense variety of distinct objects, and signifies a description of things, as well as an account of facts. The animal, the vegetable, the mineral kingdoms, and, in a word, every department of the natural world, have each its history. But that which is understood to be meant by history, in its particular application, is an account of the principle transactions of mankind, from the first records of human affairs, up to the present time. The historian has, by an excellent ancient critic, been very justly termed "a philosopher teaching by examples." The objects of his labours, are the instruction, the refinement, and the happiness of mankind. How, and why history should conduce to those ends, is a subject highly worth the trouble of investigation. A celebrated metaphysician and philosopher, in an argument to prove the doctrine of NECESSITY, says, "it is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity amongst the actions of men, in all ages, and nations; and, that human nature remains just the same, in its principles and operations. The same motives produce the same actions: The same events follow the same causes: Ambition, avarice, self-love, vanity, friendship, generosity, and public spirit; these passions, nursed in various degrees, and distributed through society, have been from the beginning of the world, and still are, the sources of all the actions and enterprizes, that have ever been observed among mankind. Would you know the sentiments, inclinations, and course of life, of the Greeks and Romans? Study well the temper and actions of the French and English: You cannot be much mistaken, in transferring to the former, most of the observations you have made, with regard to the latter. Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange, in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by shewing men in all varieties of cir-



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cumstances, and situations, and furnishing us with materials from which we may form our observations, and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action, and behaviour. Records of wars, intrigues, factions, and revolutions, are so many collections of experiments, by which the politician, or moral philosopher, fixes the principles of his science, in the same manner as the physician or natural philosopher, becomes acquainted with the nature of plants, minerals, and other external objects, by the experiments which he forms concerning them. Nor are the earth, water, and other elements, examined by ARISTOTLE and HYPOCRATES, more like those which at present lie under our observation, than the men described by POLIBIUS and TACITUS, are to those who now govern the world."— Here then is the fundamental principle of history, which supplies to us the want of experience of the past, and fills the mind with the knowledge we should have had of mankind, had we all the time been living witnesses of their conduct. As experience is conversant about the present, and the present enables us to form just conjectures of the future, so history, being conversant about the past, and informing us of the things that have been, enables us the better to form judgments of the things that are, and thus fits us for action, and for thought. From this long continuity of experience, that is to say, of the past, taken from historical authority, and of the present, from our own observation, we imbibe the most perfect instruction attainable, in the principles of human nature, and become qualified, not only, to regulate our own conduct, but to speculate on that of others: Conducted by this guide, we reach the knowledge of men's inclinations, motives, and feelings, by their actions, their expressions, and even by their gestures; and, on the other hand, can calculate their future conduct, and predict their actions in any supposeable circumstances, in which they may be placed, by a knowledge of their motives, inclinations, and temper. By it, rendered sharp and vigorous, the

mind penetrates beyond the surface of human affairs, unravels the intricacies, winds through the mazes, the sophisms, the subtleties of human policy; pierces through the deceits, the pretexts, the simulative appearances, and pretences of men, however specious and plausible, and discovers the latent truth, though deeply entrenched and concealed behind artifice and falshood. Furnished with this clue, and aware of the unerring uniformity of human action, we are able to correct our very instructors, and to detect their misrepresentations and errors; to deride the stories, related by CURTIUS, of ALEXANDER's supernatural prowess, as we do those of dragons and centaurs; and to rank some parts of certain modern travels, with the most extravagant stories of SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE.

Mr. Locke recommends the study of geometry, even to those who have no design to be geometricians; for this reason, that though such persons may forget every problem that has been proposed, and every solution that they and others have given, the habit of pursuing long trains of ideas will still remain with them; and, the faculty of reasoning, and looking for demonstration, before the yeilding of assent to any proposition, will be their's for ever. In like manner the reading of history imparts to the mind the habit of investigating character, of scanning the designs, and motives of men, and of weighing evidence with impartiality and truth. An account of mankind, in their various relations to one another, and the proceedings and conduct of men, for the interest, the benefit, the pleasure, or the emolument of themselves, or of others in life, must necessarily enlarge our views of the human character, and give full exercise to our judgment of all human affairs. As a liberal employment for the mind, nothing can be superior to civil history; including, as it does, an account, not only of the different states, which have existed in the world, but, likewise of those men, who in different ages, have most eminently distinguished themselves, either for good, or bad



actions. To the philosopher, the gentleman, and the man of the world, whether they look for wisdom, or only seek for amusement, history is of the first importance; and ought to be recommended, above all, to the young, who, not being yet contaminated by the infection of that most prevalent vice, selfishness, may be supposed susceptible of happy impressions, from those examples of ancient virtue, which are recounted in history, and which reflect so much honor upon human nature. Advantages of this kind more or less may be derived from history, by men of all countries, and under any form of government; but, to the citizens of great republics, where every individual has a share in the state, may have a seat in its legislature, and, for that reason, ought to be instructed in the principles of good government, and legislation, history is not merely useful, but indispensably necessary. He who has not informed himself, how the civil rights of men, in past times, have been determined and secured, or how violated by force, or destroyed by the frauds of cunning ambition, will be little able to provide for the security of his own rights, or of those of his fellow citizens. While history supplies him with that information, it imparts to his soul an admiration of the heroism and magnanimity, which formed the characters of the great and good men who have gone before us, and at the same time, such an abhorrence of the weakness and wickedness of the bad, that the ardent virtues of the patriot, and the intrepid champion of liberty become insensibly interwoven with the fabric of the man, and confer upon him the disposition, often the power, also, to be a blessing to his fellow citizens, a credit to his country, and in the end, perhaps, an honor to the human race.

And here it would be scarce pardonable to withhold from the reader a passage written by M. D'Alembert upon this subject, conceived and expressed with great felicity of thought and language. After giving a short view of the principal objections which some sullen and sour philosophers have

brought against the study of history in general, he says, "In opposition to those cynics, let us place the wise and moderate philosopher, who reads history in order to be convinced that past generations have no reason to reproach the present, and to learn to forgive the follies of the age he lives in; to comfort himself under the afflictions and calamities of life, by a view of that numerous and illustrious race which suffered before him; to search, in the annals of time, for those valuable, though slight and scanty traces of the efforts of human genius, and for those much clearer traces of the pains which have been taken in all ages to stifle it; to see, without emotion, his own fate in that of his predecessors, if he happen to join the same success to the same courage, and if he have the good or bad fortune to add any new turrets to the fabric of human reason. History seems to repeat to us what the Mexicans said to their children at their birth: *Remember that you are come into the world in order to suffer—suffer then and be silent!* It is thus that history interests, comforts, and encourages him. He forgives it the uncertainty of what it teaches him, because such is the lot of human knowledge, and because the obscurity which spreads itself over the natural world, affords him some consolation, in not being able to see more clearly in the moral. He forgives it for teaching him too many things, because it costs him little to forget them, or rather he takes no pains to efface from his memory those uninteresting facts which he has collected in reading; he considers that men have in a manner agreed to look upon the knowledge of such facts as necessary, as one of the most common resources of conversation, in a word, as one of those things which serve to fill up the immense, and frequent chasms of society.

History, therefore, is now considered one of the most important branches of polite literature; few accomplishments are more valued than a knowledge of the past transactions of different nations; and scarcely is any literary production



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more regarded than a well written history of a country. It is no wonder then that some of the greatist critics, ancient and modern, have bestowed much of their valuable time and labour, upon its improvement, and laid down instructions for the manner in which it should be written. CICERO, QUINTILIAN, BOLINGBROKE, VOLTAIRE, D'ALEMBERT, the wise and pious DR. BLAIR, and others of no less note, have enriched polite literature with the most noble and valuable rules for historical composition.

A narrative of national events, may exercise the imagination, amuse the fancy, and afford gratification to the curious; but can never improve the understanding to the intent and purposes for which history ought to be written, unless every event be accompanied with a close investigation of its motives and causes, remote as well as proximate; since it is only from a comparison of the former with the latter, that inferences can be deduced, and general principles established, for the more easily unravelling the texture of the human temper and disposition. To enter into an abrupt detail of events, without introductory matter to serve as a clue to guide the readers mind, in its progress through the history, is, though frequently practised, very injudicious. That which is not clearly intelligible cannot be instructive, and a reader will find it difficult, if not impossible, to form a conception of historical passages, if he be not furnished by the historian with a knowledge of the nature and manners, the fundamental feelings, disposition and bias, as well as the long and deep rooted habits and customs of the people whose annals he writes. It is, therefore, highly expedient, that he should conduct the reader through a regular progress of causes, moral and physical, as well as of fundamental instructions, and throw all the light possible upon all the predisposing circumstances which can be considered as influencing the people, concerning whom he writes, and impelling them to those events. It is this which raises history to the rank it holds in science, and confers on the historian the deserved

title of moralist and philosopher: for while he traces out step by step the causes of the gradual advancement of a nation from its infant state, up to maturity, or from maturity to decline and extinction; while he points out the particulars which gave it life, the springs which gave it motion, and the sources from which it drew the sustentation and strength that enabled it to march forward, he is then laying down the most important lessons for the conduct of rulers to their fellow men, and of men to their legal, appointed rulers. To the latter he teaches the expedience of vigilance and caution in their choice of the former, and to the former he demonstrates the policy of justice; for in all the events of history there will be found uniformly exemplified this great, leading truth, that where there is not on one hand, cheerful obedience, and on the other probity and justice, no sound policy can exist.

It is unalterably fixed in the nature of things, that evidence must be obscure in proportion as it is remote; the historian, therefore, who relates events far removed from the age in which he writes, labours under disadvantages, against which there is no possible provision, but the industry, fidelity, and accuracy of the original chronicler. The former derives his chief lights from the latter, who ought, therefore, to investigate as closely as he can, all the preceding circumstances, and latent causes, that produced the state of things in which the nation is found at the period where his narrative commences, and which can be supposed to have an influence upon the people, and their conduct in the further progress of their history. Thus the historian makes the spring head, from which the stream of his narration flows so clear that it can be seen to the bottom, where, if there appear consistency in the events, and congruity between them and their imputed causes, the work becomes authority, and the author obtains credit for candour and truth.



These observations, if applicable to history in general, are particularly so to the great epochs which constitute boundary marks in the tradition of the world, and by great revolutions in human or national affairs, mark it out into separate divisions. For when great changes take place in the political state of great, leading nations, when an extraordinary concurrence of events overthrows long established systems of government, and substitutes others in their place, the effects are so potent, either to good or evil, and their consequences so important, that the causes which gave them birth ought to be developed, in order that from the experience they afford, systems of precautionary arrangement may be formed, the better to prevent, or with the greater certainty and facility to produce similar effects in future. At the same time, the chasm which is made in the political world by such violent concussions, is generally so wide, and the chain of human affairs is so extremely rent, that in process of time little connexion remains visible between the two parts. The relations which it is known they once bore to each other cannot without great difficulty, if at all, be traced; the consequences remain on record, but the causes are lost, if they be not circumstantially collected and faithfully recorded by those who live at the time, or at a period, not very remote from it.

Such, however, are the epochs upon which philosophy loves to dwell, and from which the best instruction is derived. The chain of a political system being broken, new interests arise, not only in the particular nation where the change takes place, but in all those which, by contiguity, vicinage, or any other relation, are embraced in one general system of policy along with it: and those new interests beget new measures of government, and new forms of conduct, which, in their turn, create new manners, new morals, and new laws. These are the periods which form the epochs in history on which the mind rests with pleasure, and from which it sets out again upon a fresh

roul, commencing a new reckoning. Of such there have been several, in each of which the general complexion of human affairs has undergone vast alteration; but it has been allotted to the present generation to see changes, which, in magnitude and importance, far exceed any that have ever occurred. And it must be pleasing to reflect, that whatever the materials may be which they afford for the instruction of posterity, there is little chance of their being lost for want of illustration.

Fortunately it happens that the revolution which has done more than any other, to advance the interests and promote the happiness of mankind, that of America, is of an origin less disputable, and stands upon a basis more clear and perfect than any other that occurs in the history of the world. The causes are not only written in the records of the first national councils in the universe, but inscribed in the hearts and memories of living men. They have occupied the attention, exercised the talents, and engaged the laborious industry, and strenuous exertions of the most splendid constellation of genius that ever illumined the world. Some of the greatest orators, philosophers, and statesmen took an active, earnest share in them, and their labours still exist, de'ached through the literature of the times. It is therefore highly important to collect those, while the memory of cotemporaries may serve to arrange, to correct, to illustrate, and reduce them to proper order, to skim the cream of each, and combine them in the most clear, concise, and intelligible form possible.

Probably posterity will have reason to think that no event in history has been productive of such extraordinary effects, and beneficial consequences to human affairs as the American revolution. Not only the state of nations and the practical concerns of their governments have already been changed, but the current of human opinion seems to have been turned out of its customary course, and taught to flow through channels before unknown. A great, and before invincible kingdom,



coerced with force of arms, by colonies of her own planting, was a novelty, which, till it happened, the most credulous could scarcely have believed, and her dismemberment of a principal and valuable part of her empire, was a stroke too heavy, and an accomplishment of too great importance, not to excite strong sensations in every civilized part of the globe. The magic circle of reverential opinion and awe which gave authority to princes, and bound communities down in unconditional submission, being broken in upon, all that lurked behind it was more minutely examined, and being found very different from that which it was formerly thought to be, was treated with diminished respect, and lost much of that influence over the mind which plants the root of despotism, not in the power of the ruler, but in that more fruitful soil, the passiveness of the people. Those, who before never ventured to let a thought stray beyond the ordinary business of social life and domestic duties, now began to aspire to the investigation of opinions, to the discussion of principles, and to the cultivation of parts of knowledge, before concealed from all but the learned, and contemplated only by the moralist, the philosopher, or the speculative politician. It was now seen that authority could not stand on authority alone, and that when it stretched out its arm beyond the limits of justice, it became so weak that it might safely be attacked. All the prejudices, whether salutary or mischievous, lovely or odious, which inhered in the previous order of things, either vanished entirely, or operated so feebly, that they could no longer resist the torrent of newly begotten thought, which rushed in upon the human mind, or exclude the light that broke in upon the world, through the new made breach. Men began to compare those in authority, with the people whom they ruled; and to measure the respective talents and qualities of both: and the results not being at all times favourable to the former, raised so many exceptions to the foregone general sentiments of mankind, and impressed them with a persuasion of their fallacy. Hitherto

men had always presumed, that where authority was, there resided talents, and virtue also, and willingly submitted to the power which they conceived to be inseparable from authority, and looked upon as irresistible, because founded on wisdom and justice. But they were now let into a secret ; they now found that authority could be unwise and unjust, and that its power could be successfully resisted ; they found that armed with right, a people might deride arrogance and injustice, even when cloathed with power and authority ; and that those potent instruments of despotism, a numerous hireling soldiery, were no match for a handful of virtuous men, however unused to battle, untrained to wars, or unskilled in military affairs, when armed with a keen sense of conscious right, and sustained by well grounded confidence in the purity and justice of their cause. On the other hand, princes began to apprehend that it was necessary to rest their security a little less upon authority, and more upon justice ; that little was to be expected in future from passive submission, and that to possess authority securely they must exercise it with moderation and virtue, if not sincere, at least plausible. The effects of this new train of thought were productive of more benefit to the people, than satisfaction to the princes of Europe, who while they yielded a partial acquiescence to the impulse which they could not entirely resist, looked with an eye of no favorable kind to America, as the source from which it sprung.

There are few cases in which men cannot extract, from either reason or imagination, some hopes to cheer them, even in the most desperate circumstances : It is not surprising, then, that the old authorities in Europe, should, with sanguine avidity, grasp at the expectation which reasonably offered itself, that the benefits of the revolution, and the proud hopes with which it inspired America, would be dashed by anarchy, and that the people of that country, having no government at all, would soon repent of their having



shaken off a bad one. In forming this conjecture they were right in ratiocination, but wrong in fact. For though experience of the event has shewn, that anarchy did not succeed the revolution, reason, operating upon all the materials which the uniform experience of the world at that time afforded, could not but lead to the conclusion, that a people, just relieved from a scourging war, liberated from a state of dependance upon a distant empire, entirely emancipated, even from formal homage and nominal fealty, and introduced at once into a state before unknown to them, of perfect independence, with unbounded liberty, to act as suited their fancies, their pleasure, their caprice, or their judgment, would fall into anarchy, even in the expedients to which they would be obliged to recur for providing themselves with a government, and in the various experiments it would be necessary for them to make, before that object could be accomplished. That reasoning is certainly good, which is contradicted only by an improbable event; and surely it was an improbable event which followed the acknowledgment of American independence. The reducing to order the mass of confusion that followed the separation of the colonies from the mother country, and absolved the new people from all law, will stand to the remotest time, a singular and glorious monument of the virtue, the patriotism, and the wisdom, of that people, and afford a theme on which future historians and philosophers, will dwell with rapture and astonishment. It may indeed be considered a moral and political phenomenon, the real existence of which, after ages would find it difficult to believe, or to account for, if it were not authenticated by indubitable evidence, accompanied with correspondent illustration. To put the event upon the solid footing of undeniable historical truth, to develop the means, and to perpetuate the memory of those by whom it was effected, is the duty of the chronicler of the present day, and is the purpose of the present attempt.

## CHAPTER II.

## HISTORY OF THE PASSING TIMES.

HAVING, in the preceding chapter, laid the foundation of the RETROSPECTIVE history, promised in the Prospectus, the reader is now to be introduced to that of the passing time: but is previously to be informed, that according to the arrangements intended to be pursued in this work, the two separate parts, that is to say, the history of the past, and the history of the present, will be given under two separate heads; the former, beginning with that period when the first seeds of the American Revolution were sown in the British cabinet, and ending in 1804, will be given in such monthly portions as the limits of each number will allow: The latter, commencing with the meeting of Congress, in November last, will proceed in continuity through the future; the Register of each year, comprehending within itself the political events and domestic occurrences of that period. According to this arrangement, the first thing in priority of rank, as a state paper, as well as in its importance as the ground-work of subsequent legislative acts, is the PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, delivered to CONGRESS, on the 8th of November last, by his Secretary, *Mr. Burwell*.

## MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT. 1804.

*To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.*

**T**O a people, fellow-citizens, who sincerely desire the happiness and prosperity of other nations; to those who justly calculate that their own well being is advanced by that of the nations with which they have intercourse, it will be



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satisfaction to observe, that the war which was lighted up in Europe a little before our last meeting, has not yet extended its flames to other nations, nor been marked by the calamities which sometimes stain the footsteps of war.—The irregularities, too, on the ocean, which generally harass the commerce of neutral nations, have, in distant parts, disturbed ours less than on former occasions: but, in the American seas, they have been greater from peculiar causes; and even within our harbours and jurisdiction, infringements on the authority of the laws have been committed, which have called for serious attention. The friendly conduct of the governments, from whose officers and subjects these acts have proceeded, in other respects, and in places more under their observation and control, gives us confidence that our representations on this subject will have been properly regarded.

While noticing the irregularities committed on the ocean by others, those on our own part should not be omitted, nor left unprovided for. Complaints have been received, that persons residing within the United States, have taken on themselves to arm merchant vessels, and to force a commerce into certain ports and countries, in defiance to the laws of those countries. That individuals should undertake to wage private war, independently of the authority of their country, cannot be permitted in a well ordered society. Its tendency to produce aggression on the laws and rights of other nations, and to endanger the peace of our own, is so obvious, that I doubt not you will adopt measures for restraining it effectually in future.

Soon after the passage of the act of last session, authorising the establishment of a district and port of entry on the Mobile, we learnt that its object was misunderstood on the part of Spain. Candid explanations were immediately given, and assurances that reserving our claims in that quarter as a subject of discussion and arrangement with Spain, no act was meditated in the mean time inconsistent with the peace

and friendship existing between the two nations ; and that conformably to these intentions, would be the execution of the law : that government had however thought proper to suspend the ratification of the convention of 1802. But the explanations which would reach them soon after, and still more the confirmation of them by the tenor of the instrument establishing the port and district, may reasonably be expected to replace them in the dispositions and views of the whole subject which originally dictated the convention.

I have the satisfaction to inform you, that the objections which had been urged by that government, against the validity of our title to the country of Louisiana, have been withdrawn : its exact limits, however, remaining still to be settled between us. And to this is to be added, that having prepared and delivered the stock created in execution of the convention of Paris, of April 30th, 1803, in consideration of the cession of that country, we have received from the government of France an acknowledgement in due form of the fulfilment of that stipulation.

With the nations of Europe in general our friendship and intercourse are undisturbed ; and from the governments of the belligerent powers especially, we continue to receive those friendly manifestations which are justly due to an honest neutrality, and to such good offices consistent with that, as we have opportunities of rendering.

The activity and success of the small force employed in the Mediterranean in the early part of the present year, the reinforcements sent into that sea, and the energy of the officers having command in the several vessels, will, I trust, by the sufferings of war, reduce the barbarians of Tripoli to the desire of peace on proper terms. Great injury, however, ensues to ourselves, as well as others interested, from the distance to which prizes must be brought for adjudication, and from the impracticability of bringing hither such as are not sea-worthy.



The bey of Tunis, having made requisitions unauthorized by our treaty, their rejection has produced from him some expressions of discontent. But to those who expect us to calculate whether a compliance with unjust demands will not cost us less than a war; we must leave as a question of calculation for them also, whether to retire from unjust demands will not cost them less than a war? We can do to each other very sensible injuries by war; but the mutual advantages of peace, make that the best interest of both.

Peace and intercourse with the other powers on the same coast, continue on the footing, on which they are established by treaty.

In pursuance of the act, providing for the temporary government of Louisiana, the necessary officers for the territory of Orleans were appointed in due time to commence the exercise of their functions on the first day of October. The distance, however, of some of them, and indispensable previous arrangements, may have retarded its commencement in some of its parts. The form of government thus provided, having been considered but as temporary, and open to such future improvements as further information of the circumstances of our brethren might suggest, it will of course be subject to your consideration.

In the district of Louisiana it has been thought best to adopt the division into subordinate districts which had been established under its former government. These being five in number, a commanding officer has been appointed to each, according to the provision of the law, and so soon as they can be at their stations, that district will also be in a due state of organization. In the mean time their places are supplied by officers before commanding there, and the functions of the governor and judges of Indiana having commenced, the government we presume, is proceeding in its new form. The lead mines in that district offer so rich a supply of that metal as to merit attention. The report now

communicated will inform you of the state, and the necessity of immediate enquiry into their occupation and titles.

With the Indian tribes established within our newly acquired limits, I have deemed it necessary to open conferences for the purpose of establishing a good understanding and neighbourly relations between us. So far as we have yet learned, we have reason to believe that their dispositions are generally favourable and friendly. And, with these dispositions on their part, we have in our own hands means which cannot fail us, for preserving their peace and friendship. By pursuing an uniform course of justice towards them, by aiding them in all the improvements which may better their condition, and especially by establishing a commerce on terms which shall be advantageous to them, and only not losing to us, and so regulated, as that no incendiaries of our own, or any other nation, may be permitted to disturb the natural effects of our just and friendly offices; we may render ourselves so necessary to their comfort and prosperity, that the protection of our citizens from their disorderly members will become their interest and their voluntary care. Instead, therefore, of an augmentation of military force, proportioned to our extension of the capital employed in that commerce as a more effectual, æconomical and humane instrument, for preserving peace and good neighbourhood with them.

On this side the Mississippi an important relinquishment of native title has been received from the Delawares. That tribe, desiring to extinguish in their people the spirit of hunting, and to convert superfluous lands into the means of improving what they retain, has ceded to us all the country between the Wabash and Ohio, south of, and including the road from the Rapids towards Vincennes; for which they are to receive annuities in animals and implements for agriculture, and in other necessities. This acquisition is important, not only for its extent and fertility, but as fronting three



hundred miles on the Ohio, and near half that on the Wabash; the produce of the settled country descending those rivers will no longer pass in review of the Indian frontier, but in a small portion; and, with the cession heretofore made by the Kaskaskias, nearly consolidate our possessions north of the Ohio, in a very respectable breadth from Lake Erie to the Mississippi. The Piankeshaws having some claim to the country ceded by the Delawares, it has been thought best to quiet that by fair purchase also. So soon as the treaties on this subject shall have received the constitutional sanction, they shall be laid before both houses.

The act of Congress, of February 28, 1803, for building and employing a number of gun-boats, is now in a course of execution to the extent there provided for. The obstacle to naval enterprize, which vessels of this construction offer for our sea-port towns, their utility towards supporting within our waters the authority of the law, the promptness with which they will be manned by the seamen and militia of the place in the moment they are wanting, the facility of their assembling from different parts of the coast to any point where they are required in greater force than ordinary, the æconomy of their maintenance and preservation from decay when not in actual service, and the competence of our finances to this defensive provision without any new burthen, are considerations which will have due weight with Congress in deciding on the expediency of adding to their number from year to year, as experience shall test their utility, until all our important harbours, by these and auxiliary means, shall be secured against insult and opposition to the laws.

No circumstance has arisen since our last session, which calls for any augmentation of our regular military force. Should any improvement occur in the militia system, that will be always seasonable.

Accounts of the receipts and expenditures of last year, with estimates for the ensuing one, will, as usual, be laid before you.

The state of our finances continues to fulfill our expectation. Eleven millions and an half of dollars, received in the course of the year ending on the 30th of September last, have enabled us, after meeting all the ordinary expenses of the year, to pay upwards of three millions six hundred thousand dollars of the public debts, exclusive of interest. The payment, with those of the two preceding years, has extinguished upwards of twelve millions of principal, and a greater sum of interest within that period; and by a proportionate diminution of interest, renders already sensible the effect of the growing sum yearly applicable to the discharge of principal.

It is also ascertained that the revenue accrued during the last year exceeds that of the preceding; and the probable receipts of the ensuing year, may safely be relied on as sufficient, with the sum already in the treasury, to meet all the present demands of the year, to discharge upwards of three millions and an half of the engagement incurred under the British and French conventions, and to advance in the further redemption of the funded debt as rapidly as had been contemplated.

These, fellow-citizens, are the principal matters which I have thought it necessary at this time to communicate for your consideration and attention. Some others will be laid before you in the course of the session. But in the discharge of the great duties confided to you by our country, you will take a broader view of the field of legislation.

Whether the great interests of agriculture, manufactures, commerce or navigation, can within the pale of your constitutional powers, be aided in any of their relations? Whether laws are provided in all cases where they are wanting? Whether those provided are exactly what they should be? Whether any abuses take place in their administration or in that of the public revenues? Whether the organization of the public agents, or of the public force,



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is perfect in all its parts? In fine, whether any thing can be done to advance the general good? Are questions within the limits of your functions, which will necessarily occupy your attention. In these, and all other matters, which you, in your wisdom, may propose for the good of our country, you may count with assurance on my hearty co-operation and faithful execution.

THOMAS JEFFERSON.

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## C O N G R E S S.

NOVEMBER 12, 1804.

The House of Representatives being then in a committee, the following seven resolutions were submitted by Mr. RANDOLPH, and agreed to *nem. con.*

*First*—RESOLVED, That so much of the message of the President of the United States, as relates to the restraining of our merchant vessels, arming themselves without authority, and attempting to force a commerce into certain ports and countries in defiance of the laws of those countries, be referred to a select committee.

*Second*—RESOLVED, That so much of the message of the President as relates to an amelioration of the form of government of the territory of Louisiana, be referred to a select committee.

*Third*—RESOLVED, That so much of the message of the President, as recommends an enlargement of the capital employed in commerce with the Indian tribes, be referred to a select committee.

*Fourth*—RESOLVED, That so much of the message of the President, as relates to the defence and security of our ports and harbours, and supporting within our waters the authority of the laws, be referred to a select committee.

*Fifth*—RESOLVED, That so much of the message of the President, as relates to the improvement of the militia system of the United States, be referred to a select committee.

*Sixth*—RESOLVED, That so much of the message of the President, as relates to the inconvenience which arises from the distance to which, under existing laws, prizes captured from the corsairs of Tripoli must be brought for adjudication, be referred to a select committee.

*Seventh*—RESOLVED, That so much of the message of the President, as relates to the lead mines of Louisiana, be referred to the committee of commerce and manufactures.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

NOVEMBER 29.

On the first of those resolutions, a bill was brought in, passed the House of Representatives, and was carried up to the Senate, through which it passed on the twenty-fourth of February. The first clause enacts, that no vessel, armed, or having the means of arming at sea, owned wholly or in part by any citizen of the United States, or person residing therein, shall receive a clearance, or be permitted to leave the port where she has so armed, or obtained the means of arming, for the West India Islands, or any place between Cayenne and the Bay of St. Bernard, without giving bond with two sufficient sureties, together with the master or commander, in a sum double the value of the said vessel, her arms, stores, rigging, &c. that such arms shall not be used for any purpose but resistance and defence, in case of attack. And that any arms and ammunition taken out by such vessel shall not be sold, but returned back within the United States, or otherwise accounted for. The second clause enacts, that no armed merchant vessel shall receive a clearance, or be permitted to leave port, (except those described in the first section) unless the owners or their agents, and the commander shall make oath that such



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vessel is not bound to or intended for the West Indies, or any place between Cayenne and St. Bernard ; and unless bond be given with the penalties before mentioned, that she shall not go to those places, unless compelled by accident. And that in that case, no part of the cargo shall be sold, unless so much as may be absolutely necessary to enable her to proceed on her intended voyage. The third section provides for the prosecution and condemnation of any vessel violating the above provisions ; and the fourth and last limits the operation of the act to the end of the following session of Congress.

[*To be continued in our next.*]

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## DOMESTIC OCCURRENCES.

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**H**AD we been able to bring out the first number of this work as soon as we expected, some events which took place in the last year, would of course, have found a place under the head of Domestic Occurrences. But having found that impracticable, and the events being too important not to be recorded, we give them here in retrospect. To carry on the chain of very remarkable events, we begin with the latter end of 1803.

*October 31, 1803.*—The United States frigate Philadelphia, of 44 guns, under the command of captain Bainbridge, while in chase of a Tripolitan ship, ran upon rocks in the harbour of Tripoli, and was taken possession of the same day by the enemy. The officers and crew, the former amounting to 43, besides the commander, and the latter to 264 men, were made captives.

*December 20.*—The territory of Louisiana, was formally ceded by France to the United States. This memorable and fortunate transaction took place at New Orleans, and was

conducted with much solemnity in the presence of American, French, and Spanish troops, and a vast concourse of spectators belonging to the three nations.—Governor Claiborne of the Mississippi territory and General Wilkinson were commissioners on the part of the United States, and Laussat, commissary on the part of France.

*January 16, 1804.*—The frigate Philadelphia, which had fallen into the hands of the Tripolitans, was completely destroyed by a detachment from the American squadron in the Mediterranean under the command of lieutenant Decatur, of the Enterprise. The Philadelphia was moored close to the enemy's batteries, with all her guns loaded, and full of men. Between 20 and 30 Tripolitans were killed on deck, and several of the swarm that jumped overboard were drowned. One American was killed and one wounded on the occasion.

*February 22.*—A dreadful fire happened at Norfolk, by which about 300 buildings, mostly ware-houses, were reduced to ashes, and a loss of property incurred calculated at a million and a half of dollars.

*April 5.*—A tornado happened at and around Augusta, in the state of Georgia, which produced much mischief. Many houses were demolished, and several persons and a number of cattle destroyed.

*May 8.*—The New York State-Prison was set on fire by the prisoners, and a part of the north wing consumed. Four of the incendiaries made their escape, but were afterwards taken.

*July 4.*—The United States squadron, under the command of commodore Barron, consisting of five frigates, sailed from Hampton Roads for the Mediterranean.

*July 11.*—General Hamilton fell in a duel with Mr. Burr, vice-president of the United States, and was buried in New-York with military honors, and every mark of the most sincere respect and deep sorrow.



*July 15.*—The Chiefs of the Osage tribe of Indians arrived in the city of Washington, on a tour through the states.

*August 3.*—An attack was made by the squadron under command of commodore Preble, in the Mediterranean, against the Tripolitan armament in the harbor of Tripoli, when three of the enemy's gun boats were captured, and one sunk, and a number of his men killed. Considerable damage was done to the fortifications of the town. Another attack was made on the 7th, in which also the enemy suffered considerably. Three officers and ten men belonging to the American squadron were killed, and one gun-boat blew up, in these engagements.

A hurricane, such as has not been witnessed in this part of the world, since the year 1752, took place on the coast of the southern states of America, in September last. It commenced on the night of Friday, the 7th, and blew with unabated fury, only changing its direction, for the whole of Saturday, and till the morning of Sunday the 9th, at one o'clock. It began at north-east: on Saturday morning it changed to east, and in the afternoon of that day veered round to south-east. A minutely detailed account of the particulars of the mischief which was done, would be more tedious and afflicting than useful. Most of the wharves were greatly damaged. Governor's bridge was broken in several places. The east end of the fish market was carried away. The shipping sustained immense damage, and contributed to that of the wharves, upon some of which vessels were thrown by the wind and waves. The ship Columbus, which was lying at Keith's wharf, taking in a cargo, was sunk, as were several smaller vessels, and particularly the Spanish sloop Montserrat. Vessels of various sizes and descriptions were sent down at their anchors, or thrown ashore; some irreparably shattered, some left high and dry on the land, and all more or less damaged; those which had cargoes on board, being obliged to discharge them, and to undergo repairs. Seve-

ral stores and other buildings, were washed away by the sea, or fell before the irresistible violence of the wind, and their contents, to a considerable amount in rice and cotton, were destroyed. New East Bay street, which had been repaired at a great expence, since the storm of 1800, was again destroyed; the sea broke through it, and rushing with indescribable impetuosity into Water street, and the parts adjacent, compelled the inhabitants to quit their houses, inundating the lower stories to the depth of 14 inches. Not only Water street was covered, but even in Meeting street, the flood was two feet deep. The havock in South Bay was truly terrible, the bulwark from Meeting street to M'Kenzie's wharf, was carried away, and the house of Mr. Veitch was washed down, a poor negro fellow being killed by the falling of the chimney. Here too the tide rose so high that the inhabitants were obliged to quit their houses, and take shelter in the interior of the city; it is stated that the water was higher than in the usual spring tides, and much higher than it has ever been known to rise since the tremendous hurricane of 1752, of which we purpose to put upon record in a future number, an accurate description, written by a gentleman in this city. The shores of the islands and banks of the rivers were covered with the wrecks of vessels and boats, lumber, and other things, the ruins of the gale; in the streets and neighbouring gardens, trees were torn up by the roots, fences were blown down and much injury in various ways was done, the vegetation being blasted by the salt carried with the spray.

During the hurricane a circumstance was observed, which merits particular notice. It was high water on Saturday at twelve o'clock, at six o'clock the tide had fallen only about two feet; it was therefore feared, that as the ebb was then so small, the next tide would be higher; but, strange to tell, when the flood tide began to make, the water still fell, and continued to do so till one o'clock on Sunday morning, the time for high water, when it was found lower than it had



been the day before, at the time of low water. The loss of property in the city was immense ; it has been stated that general Gadsden lost in one way or other, little short of fifteen thousand pounds, and that it will take ten thousand pounds to repair the loss sustained by the public in the destruction of East Bay.

While the people in the city were suffering in a manner which the reader may readily imagine, on account of themselves and their property, their sensations respecting their friends on Sullivan's island, were of the most afflicting kind. It was just the season of the year when the malignant air of the city sends a large portion of its inhabitants to the salubrious air of that island. There were but few, if any, of the inhabitants that remained in Charleston, who had not at the time, some relatives, friends, or acquaintances, in whose lives they were interested, on the island ; they could not see, nor could they get intelligence from thence, how it really fared with them ; therefore, they could only conjecture, and from conjecture little comfort could reasonably be derived.—The low situation of the island, its entire exposure to all winds blowing from the east, and its loose sandy soil, which afforded but a flimsy foundation for buildings, was known to every one. The sea had risen at Charleston, nearly to a level with the surface of the island, and the houses being built of wood, they knew, would of course be an easy prey to the fury of the waves, if they should escape that of the storm ; they were aware too, that there was no shelter there, no retreat from thence ; and the melancholy reflection that no boat could get there, heightened their apprehensions to horror : It appeared highly probable that not one house would be left standing ; and it was not till Sunday at noon, that a boat could venture to their aid. The first relief they received from this general state of fearful suspense, was much more satisfactory than they had reason to expect it to be ; instead of hearing of a scene of general havock and devastation, it turned out, that about twenty

houses only, were either blown down or carried away, their sandy foundations being washed from under them; the inhabitants taking shelter in the lazaretto, barracks and other parts of the island, not immediately exposed to the fury of the waves. It may readily be conceived, that in such a situation, little could be done to save the furniture and other property in the houses that were swept away. The surface of the sea and the adjacent shores, were covered with articles of various kinds, which drifted off before the wind and water.

The situation of a number of families was truly distressing. In many cases the houses were occupied by women and children alone, who were unable to help themselves; and but for the prompt assistance afforded by several gentlemen on the island, they must have perished. Several houses which have stood the gale, we are told owe their security to large beds of sand which were driven against them, and formed a rampart. Some of the finest buildings were destroyed, viz.—those of Mrs. Middleton, Mr. G. Manigault, Mr. J. Manigault, Mr. Ogilvie, Mr. Coffin, Col. Stevens, Mr. Courtney, Mr. Littlejohn, Mrs. Ramage, Mr. Brailsford, Mr. Wragg, Mrs. Hill, Mr. Watson, Mr. Chambers, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Calder, and Mr. Green. Several gentlemen who were at the time on the island, have expressed as their firm conviction, that if the tide had continued to rise half an hour longer, not a single building would have been left standing. From Fort Moultrie, near which the sea made a clear breach, to the cove, every spot was covered with the water.

It is consolatory to reflect, that very few lives, compared with what might have been reasonably expected, were lost in the vicinity of the city and island. Besides the man killed by the fall of Mr. Veitch's chimney, there were three negroes drowned in Ashley river, and a black boy was lost at the island. Losses afflicting to contemplate, but little, considering the circumstances.

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At Savannah and the neighbouring islands, the consequences were much more dreadful. There, several buildings, public and private, were destroyed, or partially damaged; the steeple of the Presbyterian church was blown down to the very foundation; many chimnies fell in; several stores with their contents were destroyed; one particularly is stated to have been carried away several hundred feet from the wharf on which it stood. The water is represented as having risen there ten or twelve feet above the common level of the spring tides, and the waves to have run very high; all the shipping in the harbour suffered, and many were thrown upon the wharves, as completely above the reach of the tide, as if they were placed there purposely for building or repairing.

For the loss of property consolation may readily be found, because it will admit of reparation, and those will only feel it acutely who sustain it; but for lives of fellow creatures, prematurely lost, every one must feel deep regret. Two children were killed by the falling in of Mr. J. Nelson's chimney, and Mr. J. F. Webb was killed, and his child bruised, by the falling of a house upon them. On Wilmington island the wife and a child of major Scriven were killed by the fall of the house. Mr. Moxham and his wife, at Hutchinson's island, were carried away and drowned, and at Fort Green, on Cockspur island, a son of captain Nichols was drowned. The number of the negroes who have been destroyed has not been ascertained; it is incredibly great however. The scene presented after the horrors of the night is well described by a person who witnessed it, in the following manner:—

“ But it was in the morning that the full horrors of the scene were witnessed. The shores covered with lumber and the ruins of stores destroyed; the wharves with shipping; the hopes of the merchants scattered among the fragments of the buildings or floating in the river, and in many of those stores which withstood the gale, damaged or ruined;



the innumerable small boats crushed like egg shells and thought almost as little worthy notice; reeds and marsh grass torn by the roots from the opposite island, and accompanied by numerous serpents, turtles, marsh-birds, &c. forming a back ground of the picture; and the negroes who had survived the night on that island, composed wholly of rice plantations, screaming for assistance and for the loss of their drowned companions, completed the affecting, the sublime collection. Insensibility itself could not have looked on unmoved."

It is in such trying circumstances as those that true manly courage and humanity disclose themselves to advantage, and operate to laudable effect; and on such occasions those who disclose such valuable qualities, lay just claim to public notice and general gratitude. While the circumstances attending this dreadful calamity are recorded, it would be unjust to leave unnoticed the meritorious conduct of two gentlemen at Savannah. A Mr. William Campbell, and a Mr. Thomas Williamson, procured a boat at eleven o'clock on Sunday night, and generously visited the Back river, where their honourable exertions were crowned with such success, that they collected and brought to Savannah, a great number of poor negroes belonging to different estates.

At Georgetown and its neighbourhood, great damage was done; and universally in all places within the reach of the sea and the storm; the banks were broken down, the crops destroyed, and the plantations incalculably injured. The devastation in general, will be felt, not only by the particular individuals who suffered, but by the whole state for a long time to come.

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*CHAPTER III.*

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*BIOGRAPHY.*

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**T**HAT mankind in general derive greater pleasure from biography than from most other kinds of writing, is so generally felt and acknowledged, that it would be superfluous here, to insist upon it. Every thing belonging to our species naturally interests us, but interests us most, when fortune, or extraordinary endowments raise the object to pre-eminence. The passion for inquiring into the lives of conspicuous men is so universal, that we cannot help indulging it in cases where not only the person is unknown, but where his actions are so remote, that we can neither form a just conception of the one, or be in any way affected by the other. The avidity and delight with which the greater part of mankind hear old stories told, and read the histories of CÆSAR, ALEXANDER, HENRY the Vth of England, HENRY the IVth of France, or other great men, is a proof of this, and shews that this passion has its source in nature, abstracted from any connection imagined to exist between the object, and our own interest. It is however, more lively when that object immediately occupies much of our attention; but when being still in existence, it is of force sufficient to rouse the curiosity and admiration of nations, and to fix an epoch in an important department of the arts of civilized life, curiosity becomes irresistible, and insatiable, and no means are left untried to procure its gratification.

Entering upon the biographical part of this work, the reader will agree, that a more proper person could not be selected, for a first object than he who, though a boy, has, for near three years, engaged the attention, and excited the admiration and astonishment of the British empire, and indeed, of the conti-

ment of Europe ; who has awakened a passion for the drama in the bosoms of the grave and aged, where it had long slept ; who has roused the literature of that great empire into the most passionate and elegant encomiums upon his genius ; and who has brought forth, to the public, some of the most learned men in the world, emulating each other as warm eulogists of a child, and as biographers of a life of only thirteen years existence. Such is the **INFANT ROSCIUS**, whose life we are about to present to the reader.

In the infinite variety of God's works, and the diversity with which the things of this world are checquered, far beyond the reach of human comprehension, there yet seem to be certain limits, beyond which the common operations of nature are forbidden to extend. And, these which the Almighty has prescribed for the ordinary course of things, human pride, or as **POPE** calls it, "reasoning pride," too often, presumptuously assumes to be the limits of the power of that being who has prescribed them, and would infer that, that which has not hitherto existed, cannot exist hereafter ; that every thing which, because it has not been hitherto experienced, cannot be understood or preconceived, must, necessarily, be impossible ; and that any departures from the ordinary course of the workings of Providence must be so many violations of nature, and of course incredible.

It sometimes, though infrequently happens, however, that the Creator, as if to check this overweening arrogance in his creatures, is pleased to call into being, things so far out of the course of nature's ordinary productions, and persons so transcendantly elevated, by affluent endowments, above the general level of mankind, as at first to appear prodigies, and for a time to stagger the belief even of those who, conscious of their own comparative blindness, and convinced of the infinite power of him, who willed the universe into existence, piously resolve every phenomenon, for which their reason cannot account, into his beneficent will.



The last, and by no means the least extraordinary, of those whom it has pleased Providence, for his own wise purposes to raise in high relief from the level of the human race, is WILLIAM HENRY WEST BETTY, the subject of the following memoir. A boy, who, at the age of little more than eleven years, has, on the grounds of personal merit alone, acquired a reputation seldom equalled, hardly, perhaps never, surpassed by an adult, in an art to which more endowments of mind and person are allowed to be requisite, than to any other in the round of civilized life; a reputation, not the temporary gift of tender sentiment for his youth, not the transient effusion of surprise, not the suffrage of the inconsiderate, misjudging vulgar, excited by an object powerfully striking to their senses; but the general suffrage, with scarcely an exception, of three polished nations, the result, alike of natural feeling and untutored nature, working in the bosoms of unlettered minds, and of the well weighed decision of the learned and refined, who feel with delicacy, examine with cautious discernment, and decide upon the principles, at once, of nature and philosophy.

Under its proper head the reader will find critical remarks upon the *acting* of this wonderful youth; but, under this head they are to read an account of his life only, which, from the shortness of its past duration, and the consequent scarcity of its incidents, will necessarily be short, but is still interesting, on account of its object; and as it goes to establish and record some points which it is probable, might hereafter be a matter of doubt or dispute; the birth-place, and parentage of persons who acquire a conspicuous rank in fame, being often claimed by countries and persons to whom they do not belong. In another point of view, it must be interesting, as it will add one to the many instances already known, of the powerful impulse with which nature directs young minds, to that art or science, in which she

has qualified them to shine with greatest lustre, and to the best effect.

*WILLIAM HENRY WEST BETTY*, only son of William Henry Betty, was born on the 13th September, 1791, as appears from the parish register of the church of St. Chads, Shrewsbury. Mr. Betty, the father, was the son of Doctor Betty, a physician of the first eminence, at Lisburn, not far from Belfast, in Ireland, at whose death he became possessed of a handsome independent fortune. His wife, Mary Stanton, was the daughter of a respectable gentleman, in the county of Worcester, in England. She was a young lady of good education and high accomplishments, and brought him a respectable fortune; part of which is entailed on the subject of these memoirs. It has been frequently said, that Miss Stanton had been formerly either a performer on a public stage, or in the frequent habit of acting in private theatres, neither of which reports have the smallest foundation in truth. The name of Stanton happens to belong to several families of the theatrical profession, in various parts of the kingdom, and this circumstance, from the mere identity of the names, may have led to a supposition, that the family of Mr. Betty was included in the number.

It is however certain, that Miss Stanton always discovered a great predilection for the amusements of the theatre; and she and her sisters, in their own family, used frequently to divert themselves with reciting plays and other pieces of poetry. An amusement, not only innocent, but under certain restrictions laudable.

Mr. Betty, at the time of the birth of his son, lived within a small distance of Shrewsbury, from whence he soon after removed to the neighbourhood of his native place, in the north of Ireland. He occupied a farm, and also carried on some business relating to the linen manufactory near Ballynahinch, in the county of Down. He remained in this situation till the

rising celebrity of his son rendered it necessary for him to give up his employments in order to attend the young gentleman in his theatrical excursions.

Here then a point is decided, which precludes all future controversy. By his father he is of Irish, by his mother of English blood. By birth he is English; but by breeding and education Irish.\*

Mr. Betty, as well as his lady, has been always attached to the entertainment of the theatre, and has been occasionally in habits of intimacy with some of the most eminent professors of the dramatic art, both here and in Ireland. Hence it is natural to suppose, that the subject of acting would be frequently introduced in the family, and master Betty must necessarily have imbibed some notions respecting it; perhaps even some inclination towards it, at a very tender age. The early enthusiasm and precocious excellence of children in different arts and acquirements, may generally be traced to some causes of this kind. The work of education begins insensibly, and at a very early period in the infant mind; and it is extremely difficult to distinguish a natural propensity from an acquired habit. Almost all the extraordinary instances which have occurred of premature abilities, have happened in the art or profession which has been exercised by the parents.

Mrs. Betty being herself an accomplished speaker, and residing in a district, where the English language is spoken in its worst state of depravity, thought it necessary to pay particular attention to the education of her son, in that ornamental and necessary acquirement. He was, therefore, ex-

\* Many disputes are said to have arisen between English and Irish on this subject. Since his birth and parentage have been publicly ascertained, new ones have arisen on a whimsical point. The English insist he is most like his mother. The Irish that he is most like his father. Ridiculous enough, but sufficient to shew how high he stands in estimation.



exercised at an early period, in the habit of reciting passages from the best authors, and was taught to pronounce the language with propriety. Her conduct in this respect, was not dictated in the smallest degree, by any views concerning his future destination in life, but was founded in her knowledge of the importance of elegant and correct speaking, as a branch of education; and she saw that her son could not possibly acquire it by any other means, in the remote situation where they resided. There is, indeed, the strongest reason to be assured, that Mrs. Betty, so far from having designed him, at an early age, for the theatrical profession, would have heard a suggestion of the kind with the utmost indignation. He was her only offspring; descended both by the father and mother's side, from families of much consideration in their respective countries: She loved him with the most passionate fondness, and possessed in their full force the usual prejudices against a profession, in itself of the highest respectability, but frequently degraded by the irregular and imprudent conduct of its members. Those particulars are mentioned, because it has been generally asserted, that Mrs. Betty had, from his earliest infancy, destined her son for the stage, and had brought him to the perfection which is now the theme of such general astonishment, by the most careful tuition, continued through his whole life, with incessant assiduity. This notion has been suggested by some who are unwilling to attribute any extraordinary effects to the mere force of natural genius,\* and it has been eagerly propagated by others, who seem anxious to represent him, as the mere creature of discipline.

In the summer of 1802, (he was then scarcely eleven years old) the play of Pizarro was brought out by the Belfast manager with much splendour, and Mrs. Siddons was the Elvira. As Mr. Betty and his son happened to be in the

\* Yet Horace says,

*Ingenium misera fortunatius Arte,  
Credit Democritus.*

town, they were induced to go to the theatre, being the first time that Master Betty had ever seen a play. From this moment his fate was decided. When he came home, he told his father, with a look of such enthusiasm, and a voice so pathetic, that those who heard him will never forget the expression, that *he should certainly die, if he must not be a player*. The wonderful acting of Mrs. Siddons in Elvira, not easily to be forgotten by the most phlegmatic, had left an impression on his glowing mind, which nothing could ever erase. It was happy for himself that his first, and therefore most durable impressions were stamped by such a model. He talked of nothing but Elvira; he spouted the speeches of Elvira, and his passion for the stage became every moment more vehement and uncontrollable. He returned with his father to Ballynahinch, but not to his usual occupations. The Siddonian accents still wrung in his ear; and her majestic march and awful brow still filled his fancy. Every thing was neglected for his favorite object; and every thing not connected with it became tiresome and insipid. His propensity grew visibly more rooted by time; his importunities were irresistible, and his parents at length finding all opposition unavailing, were compelled to think seriously of the practicability of indulging him.

It may be remarked as a strong proof of the correctness of his natural taste, that though Rolla is the hero of the piece, and a part which is eminently calculated to strike the romantic mind of youth, yet it made on his but a slight impression. Elvira alone was the heroine of his imagination, for he saw the character only through the medium of the actress. He was instantly able to separate the genuine ore from the surrounding dross, and saw at once what was to be imitated, and what to be avoided. A part of very inferior interest became predominant in his mind, because it was in the hands of a great actress.

In pursuance of the resolution he had taken, Mr. Betty returned with his son to Belfast, in order to consult Mr.



Atkins, and to ask his opinion of the boy's qualifications. Mr. Atkins is the manager of the Belfast theatre, and a man of friendly dispositions, and liberal character. In his presence Master Betty repeated some passages from the part of Elvira, with the wild and unskilful vigour of untutored genius. The manager was a good deal struck with what he had heard, but wished to have the opinion of Mr. Hough, his prompter, for whose judgment he had a considerable deference. That gentleman was accordingly sent for, and immediately discerned in the boy's recitation and action, great capabilities for a first rate actor. He gave him a few instructions, and at the same time pointed out to him the part of Rolla as a much fitter object of his study, than that of Elvira, to which he had been directed by his feelings, on seeing the performance of Mrs. Siddons. The young gentleman felt the full value of the knowledge he had received, and in the ardour of his gratitude told Mr. Hough, he was HIS GUARDIAN ANGEL. The father and son now returned once more to Ballynahinch, and Master Betty happening to find the tragedy of Zara in the house, began to study the part of Osman, in addition to that of Rolla and some others. Sometime afterwards Mr. Hough accepted a pressing invitation, which he had received from Mr. Betty to pass a short time at his house in the country, with a view of observing the boy more narrowly, and in order to give him more detailed instructions. Mr. Hough soon found that his pupil possessed a docility even greater than his genius, for whatever he was directed to do, he could instantly execute, and was sure never to forget. He found that his feelings could take the impression of every passion and sentiment, and express them in their appropriate language. Whatever was properly presented to his mind, he could immediately lay hold of, and seemed to seize by a sort of intuitive sagacity, the spirit of every sentence, and the prominent beauties of every remarkable passage.



The happy moment at length arrived, which was to realize our hero's hopes and wishes. Mr. Atkins, induced by the reports he had received, and solicitous to bring forward some extraordinary novelty on account of the extreme depression of the times, offered him an engagement to play at Belfast for four nights. Accordingly about the middle of August, in the year 1803, he announced the tragedy of Zara, the part of Osman, to be performed by *a young gentlemen only eleven years of age*. The singularity of the exhibition drew together a great croud of people, who were equally astonished and enraptured at the performance of the young actor. A gentleman of the profession who was present on the occasion, (himself a good tragedian, and a competent judge of the art) publicly declared that his performance was, even then, striking and correct beyond all belief. He discovered no marks of embarrassment on his first appearance, and went through the part without any confusion or mistake. The applauses were, of course, tumultuous and incessant. The actors of the regular company were confounded to see themselves so completely schooled by a mere infant, and even those who had formed the most sanguine expectations concerning him were amazed at his success.

The next day he was the common topic of conversation in all parts of the town. Persons of sober judgment, who had not seen him, treated the matter, as they had done every where else, with derision and incredulity. They supposed his performance to be like that of other children they had seen; that he had been taught a few attitudes and stage tricks, and had learned to look the audience in the face and speak boldly. When assured that he had excited the deepest sympathy in the spectators, and that many parts of his acting would have been thought admirable even in a man, they looked on all that was said as idle exaggeration. They determined however, to attend his next performance, and judge for themselves.

The following day he was announced for the interesting part of young Norval, in the tragedy of Douglas. His performance of this part, it was justly thought, would afford a fair test of his real capability, as the character, without requiring any violent stretch of the imagination, might in some degree be assimilated to his years and figure. The dividing as well as the "admiring throng" now made a point of attending the theatre; and the next day the whole town of Belfast, with scarcely any exceptions, were of one sentiment concerning him. He not only confirmed the favourable impression of his first performance, but he displayed new excellencies of a very high order, and such as are supposed to be of the most difficult attainment. The jealousy, rage and despair of Osman, an usual gradation of passions, were more easy to represent than the chastened spirit and modest heroism of the gallant Douglas. It was thought impossible that a boy could be brought to comprehend or to pourtray these nice effects of contending principles. But every obstacle was surmounted. He played the part with such unaffected yet energetic simplicity, that the most incredulous were satisfied, and his fame among the inhabitants of Belfast, was firmly established. He next played Rolla with equal success, and afterwards Romeo, which concluded his engagement.

[*To be continued.*]

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